

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 06264 01 OF 02 071030Z
ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 H-01 CA-01 VO-03 /034 W
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R 070835Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9102
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC HONOLULU

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 6264

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN VISIT OF STAFFDEL, TINKER AND DEHAAN

1. STAFFDEL COMPOSED OF JERRY TINKER, DALE DEHAAN, WELLS KLEIN (VOLAG ACNS) AND DR. GLENN GEELHOED, VISITED KUALA LUMPUR 27-29 AUGUST 1977 TO DISCUSS REFUGEE PROBLEMS, PRESENT AND FUTURE. MEETINGS WERE HELD WITH EMBASSY AND VOLAG STAFF, UNHCR AND WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY.

2. STAFFDEL COMMENTED THAT THEY WERE IMPRESSED BY WHAT THEY HAD SEEN IN THAILAND, AND WERE ESPECIALLY COMPLIMENTARY REGARDING REPORTING BY AMCON UDORN ON REFUGEE MATTERS IN NE THAILAND. ON THE "INTERNATIONALIZATION" OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM, STAFFDEL SAID THAT THE THAI MFA
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PAGE 02 KUALA 06264 01 OF 02 071030Z

PLANNED TO RAISE MATTER WITH THE ASEAN STANDING COMMITTEE AT A MID-SEPTEMBER MEETING IN BANGKOK, THE INTENT BEING NOT TO ASK OTHER ASEAN MEMBERS TO ACCEPT REFUGEES FROM THAILAND BUT TO TRY TO GET AGREEMENT FROM THE MEMBERS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST ASYLUM. THE THAI SEEM TO FEEL THAT SOMETIMES THEY ARE THE COUNTRY OF THRID ASYLUM, ACCEPTING CAST-OFF BOATS FROM SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA.

3. AS TIME DID NOT PERMIT A VISIT TO A BOAT CASE CAMP, SHORT TRIP WAS MADE TO THE KL TRANSIT CENTER (GETHSEMANI FRIARY) TO TALK TO SOME OF THE 25 REFUGEES AWAITING MOVEMENT. CONVERSATION WITH ONE GIRL WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING TO STAFFDEL. SHE IS AN EX-LAWYER WITH SOME ENGLISH CAPABILITY WHO HAD BEEN ABOARD A BOAT TOWED OUT TO SEA AT HIGH SPEED BY A UNIT OF SINGAPORE NAVY.

4. STAFFDEL WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHAT MOTIVATES REFUGEES TO LEAVE VIETNAM; I.E., ECONOMICS VS. FAMILY VS. POLITICAL REASONS. BOTH TINKER AND DEHAAN EMPHASIZED THEIR VIEW THAT THE USG SHOULD PUSH PRIMARILY FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION IN OUR PROGRAMS; I.E., CAT I RATHER THAN CAT II OR III REFUGEES. THEY DID REMARK, HOWEVER, THAT THE BOAT CASES ARE A SPECIAL PROBLEM AND THAT A LOWERING OF EPP STANDARDS WOULD NOT BE OUT-OF-LINE.

5. THE UNHCR MEETING WAS INFORMAL AT UNHCR REP SAMPATKUMAR'S HOUSE. TINKER INQUIRED SPECIALLY AS TO WHAT EFFECT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW PROGRAM HAD ON THE GOM POSITION TOWARD THE REFUGEES. SAMPATKUMAR REPLIED THAT HE HAD THOUGHT THE GOM HAD EASED ITS POSITION CONSIDERABLY AND, INDEED, HE HAD NOT HEARD OF ANY BOATS BEING REJECTED SINCE LATE JULY. (FYI - THREE NEW BOATS OF 60-90 REFUGEES EACH WERE ACCEPTED AT THE MERSING CAMP IN EARLY AUGUST.) LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 KUALA 06264 01 OF 02 071030Z

IN SAMPATKUMAR'S OPINION, THE GOM IS LOOKING FORWARD TO A GREATLY REDUCED REFUGEE POPULATION OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. BOTH THROUGH USG EFFORTS, AND PROGRAMS OF OTHER THIRD COUNTRIES. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE NOTED THAT NEW ZEALAND HAD JUST ACCEPTED 207 REFUGEES. A CONCERN OF THE STAFFDEL, ALSO EXPRESSED BY THE UNHCR, IS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT; I.E., THE U.S. FOLLOW-ON ON TO THE 7,000 BOAT-CASE PROGRAM. STAFFDEL AND UNHCR AGREED THAT AS LONG AS CONTINUED EMIGRATION CAN BE SHOWN, THE GOM WILL NOT REVERT TO A "NO BOAT" POLICY. STAFFDEL SAID THAT A LOW-KEY, OPEN-ENDED PROGRAM IS PREFERABLE FROM THEIR VIEW-POINT RATHER THAN A "SPLASH" ONCE A YEAR.

6. STAFFDEL ALSO MET AUGUST 29 WITH MFA PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY GHAZALI BIN CHE WAN, OFFICER IN CHARGE OF INDOCHINESE AFFAIRS AT MFA. EMBASSY REFUGEE OFFICER THOMPSON AND POL CHIEF PARTICIPATED IN THE DISCUSSIONS. DEHAAN DESCRIBED PURPOSE OF STAFFDEL'S VISIT TO AREA AS EFFORT TO ASSESS CURRENT SITUATION AND EXCHANGE VIEWS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH WHAT PORTENDS TO BE LONG-TERM PROBLEM WITH BOTH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS. GHAZALI BRIEFED STAFFDEL ON PROBLEMS AS PERCEIVED BY

GOM, PARTICULARLY INCREASED PACE OF ARRIVALS THIS YEAR AND GOM SENSITIVITY OVER DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROVIDING CARE FOR REFUGEES LOCATED IN CAMPS ALONG MALAYSIA'S ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED EAST COAST, AS WELL AS CONCERN REFUGEE CRAFT MIGHT BE USED AS COVER FOR ARMS SMUGGLING, ETC. THERE IS ALSO AN ACCUMULATION OF REFUGEES NOT REPEAT NOT MEETING STANDARD CRITERIA FOR RESETTLEMENT, AND MANY NEW ARRIVALS CITE ECONOMIC REASONS FOR FLEEING SRV, RAISING QUESTIONS AS TO HOW LONG SUCH INDIVIDUALS CAN BE CONSIDERED "REFUGEES." THESE PROBLEMS HAD LED TO GROWING TALK IN SOME CIRCLES IN FAVOR OF A HARDER LINE, PERHAPS EVEN REPATRIATING SOME TO SRV, WHICH GHAZALI SAID MFA HAD RESISTED AS BEING CONTRARY TO THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE CONVENTION. A FURTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 KUALA 06264 01 OF 02 071030Z

DILEMMA IS POSED BY THE FEAR THAT PUBLIC AWARENESS OF MALAYSIAN HOSPITALITY TO REFUGEES PENDING RESETTLEMENT ELSEWHERE MIGHT STIMULATE FURTHER REFUGEE FLOWS; HENCE THE GOM HAS SOUGHT TO AVOID PUBLICITY ON THE REFUGEE ISSUE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE INTERNATIONAL RESETTLEMENT EFFORT HAS NOT KEPT PACE WITH THE INFLOW.

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PAGE 01 KUALA 06264 02 OF 02 070950Z
ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 H-01 CA-01 VO-03 /034 W
-----125369 071114Z /10

R 070835Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9103
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 KUAL LUMPUR 6264

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7. DEHAAN EXPRESSED HOPE GOM WOULD CONTINUE TO FOLLOW LIBERAL POLICY IN OFFERING TEMPORARY ASYLUM TO REFUGEES, SINCE LIVES ARE AT STAKE. CITING THE NEW US PAROLE PROGRAM, HE SAID THAT THE U.S. WOULD CONTINUE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE UNHCR AND PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS. GHAZALI, IN TURN, INDICATED GOM WILL WELCOME THESE NEW U.S. INITIATIVES.

8. COMMENT: STAFFDEL VISIT WAS HIGHLY USEFUL, SERVING TO HIGHLIGHT FACT U.S. INTEREST IN REFUGEE PROBLEM SHARED BY CONGRESS AS WELL AS BY EXECUTIVE BRANCH. STAFFDEL ALSO AMPLIFIED POINTS WE HAVE MADE ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS TO UNHCR AND TO MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING REITERATING HOPE GOM WILL BE FORTHCOMING IN ALLOWING REFUGEES ASYLUM, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 KUALA 06264 02 OF 02 070950Z

AND IN UNDERSCORING FACT WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "POLITICAL" AND "ECONOMIC" REFUGEES.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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